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PRESS RELEASE

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HEAD: U.S. HOUSE REJECTS "RUSSIA-FIRST POLICY"

The Durbin-Knollenberg amendment to HR 7, the National Security Revitalization Act, passed the U.S. House of Representatives on a voice vote at 12:15 pm.

Mr. Gilman, chairman of the Committee on International Relations and floor manager of the bill, spoke on behalf of the amendment. Mr. Gilman mentioned the Central & EE Coalition and the groups that belong to it, including Lithuanian-Americans, as the public supporters of the amendment. Mr. Durbin spoke to explain the amendment.

The Durbin-Knollenberg amendment corrected two shortcomings of the bill. First, the amendment clarified the fact that not just the Visegrad, but all other European countries emerging from communist domination be invited to join NATO when they meet appropriate standards. In the words of the sponsors of the amendment which include Congressman Gilman and Congressman Lipinski, "Failing to make this clear will send the wrong message, that the United States does not view other European countries emerging from communist domination as potential contributors to the security guarantees of NATO in the future.

The other important feature of the amendment is that it removes the language in the bill which could have been construed to give Russia a veto over NATO expansion. This dangerous prescription was contained in paragraph 9 of sec. 603, United States Policy, "That NATO and its member nations should cooperate closely with Russia on security issues and work to strengthen other structures of security cooperation in Europe, including the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe;"

HR 7 passed the House of Representatives at 2:30 PM on a vote of 241 yeas to 181 nays. We consider the adoption of the Dubin-Knollenberg Amendment a great victory for Lithuania's security. The battle over HR 7 is the first in a year-long struggle to expand NATO and its security guarantees to the new democracies of Europe.

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